DRAFT: ED-RED Guiding Principles

Reducing Exclusionary Discipline and Racial Disparities in Student Discipline

**The introduction of SB100 and the Student Discipline Data legislation have led to important district initiatives and practices, including:**

* School districts are more closely examining and analyzing its student discipline data.
* Districts report a decrease in exclusionary discipline practices and an increase in restorative justice practices and progressive discipline.
* Increased school-wide professional development on disciplinary strategies, as well as targeted training for specific teachers with higher rates of suspension/expulsion referrals.
* A shift from focusing on the discipline incidents themselves to a more holistic approach of addressing the students’ social-emotional issues that are contributing to those incidents.

**Student Discipline challenges that persist:**

* Despite overall decrease in exclusionary discipline incidents, racial disparities continue to be an issue, even in those districts that have strong restorative justice programs.
* Districts are reporting an increase in the intensity and severity of student mental health issues and the risk/threat assessments of students, particularly in younger grades.
* Unfortunately, SB 100 was not specific enough to allow flexibility for schools to use exclusionary discipline when it is truly needed.
* The transition from exclusionary discipline to restorative justice practices requires staff and community buy-in (particularly given that SB 100 is not specific enough to allow flexibility for schools to use exclusionary discipline when it is truly needed). Professional development has helped begin to facilitate buy-in at the school district level. Additionally, building community awareness and buy-in of restorative approaches remains a difficult challenge for many school board and school districts/administrators.

**Ways to continue to move this issue forward:**

* Illinois must apply lessons learned from NCLB and the subsequent changes made in ESSA:
  + The lowest-performing schools identified under ESSA are provided with financial supports. These financial supports facilitate targeted approaches to improve those schools. The 20% of districts identified in the student discipline data bill are not provided with any financial supports to facilitate improvement.
  + ESSA utilizes a growth metric and rewards districts for that growth as it relates to student achievement. The data utilized in the student discipline data bill is static and needs to take a similar approach as ESSA. Data that is qualitative and not simply quantitative will be more meaningful.
* Schools require targeted financial resources in order to respond to the level of mental health issues they are experiencing, including professional training on trauma-informed approaches, additional mental health professionals and investments in social-emotional curriculum.
  + Examples of targeted financial resources include funding to support for high quality trainings around restorative practices and implicit bias.
* School districts have a responsibility to keep all students and staff safe. School Resource Officers and local police officers are critical partners in ensuring that safety.
* The limitations on exclusionary discipline should be reviewed.